

**Select Committee on Children Public Hearing
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Written Testimony on SB 292 AAC Homeless Youth

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 292 An Act Concerning Homeless Youth. As a statewide housing policy and advocacy organization, the Partnership for Strong Communities promotes solutions to homelessness, the development of affordable housing and the creation of vibrant communities.

We are enthusiastic about the attention and work to address and end youth homelessness, but apprehensive about an approach that includes the creation of emergency shelters.

This bill makes an important start to provide an array of critical services for young people experiencing homelessness. These services that provide immediate help to mitigate homelessness and help youth in crisis can restore lives through fostering health, education and employment and connections to family and support networks. However, approaching this challenge from a recovery and solutions-based approach would suggest that creating emergency shelters for youth is NOT the best option for fostering independence.

The efforts to address homeless youth that focus on establishing a home base and the supportive relationships that establish connections to health, education and employment can offer solutions for long-term success in young peoples' lives. The prevention of youth homelessness by organizations that provide services to at-risk youth and their families ought to be recognized as the first line of defense. Services and housing options for youth aging out of the foster care system or corrections is another way to focus remedies to a high need population. For some youth, this may mean a transitional living setting that can assist with family reunification and other services; for others, it may mean assistance in finding and paying for an affordable apartment coupled with case management.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness suggests a variety of housing models that fit the individual needs of youth who may be homeless for a range of causes. These options include safe houses, supportive housing, transitional living, dorm living with a focus on employment, shared housing and host homes.

Defining the scope of the problem of homeless youth in Connecticut, determining how existing services for out of home youth might be improved, and targeting remedies that are individually focused to offer permanent solutions that include stable housing, education and employment are critical interventions for young lives.

We are aware that many community-based organizations have direct experience and capacity to effectively deliver these solutions to youth who experience homelessness. Connecticut's record of an interagency working group that has effectively partnered with community based non-profits to create permanent supportive housing to end homelessness for thousands adults who have experienced chronic homelessness suggests an effective model for preventing and ending youth homelessness in our state. The Partnership for Strong Communities would be pleased to assist in convening stakeholders or other ways that might facilitate the best solutions.